



July 16, 2012

A message from Estes Park Mayor Bill Pinkham

Out of the ashes

At just before noon on June 23, flames erupted in the High Drive area, and pushed by strong winds, they raged through the neighborhood. A few hours later, 23 homes were little more than ashes. Fortunately, no lives were lost. It could have been much worse. But thanks to the combined efforts of the firefighters, air support, and numerous responding agencies, the Woodland Heights Fire was contained before it stormed over the ridge and further into town.

A most sincere 'thanks' goes to all the individuals and agencies that prevented this fire from becoming an even more destructive incident, like the High Park and Waldo Canyon fires.

In times of crisis we are reminded of what is truly important in our lives. When the Woodland Heights Fire broke out, Sue and I were evacuated from our home along with the hundreds of others in the area. We were fortunate to be among the many whose homes were saved. I watch with admiration those who lost their homes -- how they demonstrate remarkable resilience.

In the days since the fire, our community has come together in tremendous support of the families who lost their homes, as well as those who were displaced during the evacuation. Many community members opened their homes to the victims; businesses offered free meals and other assistance; and local, county and state organizations combined efforts to help the victims get reestablished. We can all take tremendous pride that we live in such a caring and supportive community.

On July 3, the community further demonstrated its compassion with an outstanding turnout at the Fairgrounds for a fundraiser for the victims. But it was more than a fundraiser -- it was a community social, a town-wide block party, a celebration where we enjoyed music, food, and the fellowship of friends, neighbors and new acquaintances from throughout the Estes Valley. The following night, we gathered again at the fairgrounds for a Fourth of July celebration that included the firefighters and other public safety agencies. We hardly missed the fireworks, which were replaced by a memorable tribute to our caring community and the responders who contained the fire before it spread further into town.

Today, most of the fire-ravaged debris has been sifted and precious belongings recovered by the owners and Samaritan's Purse volunteers. Many who lost their homes are excited about rebuilding, and contractor signs are already posted in driveways. The area is filled with scorched trees, and there's much to be done. But Mother Nature has provided a quenching rain, and the new green grass is a sure sign of the beginnings of recovery.

On behalf of the Town of Estes Park, I extend thanks to all the individuals, businesses, and organizations helping in the recovery, and our best wishes to all those who are rebuilding their lives.

Bill Pinkham, Mayor